

SCHISM,

Destructive of the

GOVERNMENT,

BOTH IN

CHURCH and STATE.

BEING

A Defence of the BILL; Intituled,
An Act for preventing the Growth of
SCHISM.

WHEREIN

All the Objections against it, and particularly
those in Squire STEELE's Letter, are fully
Refuted.

Humbly Offer'd to the Consideration of the HOUSE of
LORDS.

L O N D O N :

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REASONS

For passing the BILL,

ENTITLED,

An Act to prevent the Growth of
SCHISM.

SINCE so many busy Heads have presum'd to give Advice to their Superiors, to rail at the Legislature, and threaten even *Majesty* it self, it becomes every good Subject to stand up in the Defence of that Power, by which he himself is defended, and protect his Sovereign from the Insults of Her private Subjects. The present Occasion of the Clamours of a malicious Party, ever ready to impeach the Acts of their Governours, and renew Complaint after Complaint, is the *Bill* now depending before the Le-

gislature to *prevent the Growth of Schism*, which has so provoked the Dissenters and their Favourers, that they have not restrained themselves from any Bitterness of Expression against the *Powers* which they are afraid will pass it into *Act*, altho' no Reasons of any Weight have been offered to the contrary. The *Polite Author* who first led the Way to the Contempt and open Impeachment of Authority, has now renewed his Attack, and gleaned all the little Arguments from the dirty Papers of his Party into a *Pamphlet*, dress'd up in his Manner with *Fragments* of old Satire, and an arrogant Defence of his former *Libels*. How far such Papers may influence the Readers, we know not; only of him we are assur'd from his own Mouth of his Despair of *convincing any but those who were before of his own Opinion*. We will allow him without Envy the Triumph of that Conviction, while we hope to shew the more sensible Part of the Nation, that the Clamours of these People are as far wide of Reason, as their Language is of Manners and Duty.

In Order to shew the Reasonableness of this *Bill*, we shall lay down a few plain Propositions intelligible to every one; which we shall free from such Objections as may be form'd against them, and then prove the Truth of the Consequence from them; *viz.* That the *Bill* is a just, wise and reasonable Bill.

To begin then,

I. *Every Government has a Right and Power to defend, and secure it self against those from whom it suspects any Danger, and the Use of that Power cannot be unjust, when neither the Laws of God, nor Man are infringed by it.*

II. *Every Government may alter, repeal, restrain any Laws made by it self, as the Circumstances and Occasions of that Government require, provided the Rule laid down in the first Proposition is not broken by such Alteration, Repeal, or Restraint.*

III. *Promises in Governours as they respect any Part of the whole are never to be taken as absolute, but have always a Condition imply'd, that these Promises are to the Advantage of the whole, which when they are found not to be, then they either cease to be Promises, or as such are justly revocable by the Power which first made them.*

These Propositions are sufficiently plain, and will hardly be deny'd or disputed by any one; and yet from these we shall prove, that the Bill is a proper, just and reasonable Bill. It must be remembered, that it is not now to be controverted whether the Dissenters are guilty of *Schism*, or no; for that is suppos'd in the Question: And tho' the worthy Mr. Steel affirms, that *this same Schism*

Schism has not been defined since the Talk concerning this Bill; yet that is nothing to the Purpose, there being no Occasion for a New Definition, Schism being the same at all Times; and I do assure him it has been defined in some of those first Centuries he is pleased to talk of with an implicit Faith, as most Men in England.

Well then, if every Government has the Power mention'd in the first Proposition for its own Security under the Restrictions there made, we affirm that the Church of *England*, as a Part of the *Constitution*, has this Power of Security against the *Dissenters* from her, from whom she justly suspects this Danger. And again, we say, that the Means which she makes use of in this Case are not unjust, as not infringing any Law of God, or Man, and that therefore the *Bill* is reasonable.

The Objections which are form'd to answer this, are, that the Restriction is broke, and some Laws are infringed, both Religious, and Civil.

And in the 2d Place, that there is no Danger from the *Dissenters*, and that therefore the *Bill* is an unnecessary Imposition.

The contrary of these Objections will appear, if in the first Place it is proved that no Law of *Religion*, that is, *Christianity* is broke. There is no better Proof to the Persons concerned, than the Use of their own Arguments in this Case. It is a known Maxim with them, *That Christianity left*

us, as it found us in respect of our civil Rights, they being to be preserved or altered at the Pleasure of the Community at any time. Now if this be true, the *Preservation* of its civil *Rights*, obliges every *Christian* Government to provide for its own *Security*; but it is allowed that the *national Church* is a Part of our Government; and therefore it is plain that *Christianity* does not exclude the national Church from asserting to it self all its *civil Rights*. And it is as plain that part of its *civil Rights*, is a *Security* to enjoy them as long as the Government, which establish them shall last, and this *Security* it cannot better obtain than by disabling its *Enemies* from any *Power* of invading those *Rights*, which it effectually does by this *Bill*. This I think, at least to them, is an *Argument* why the *Legislature* may act thus, tho' many others might be drawn from the nature of Government it self, and as that is supported by *Religious Ties*, which oblige us to deliver the *Constitution* safe and secure to *Posterity*. However, I think this is enough for them; for as *Mr. Steel* very ludicrously in Imitation of *St. Paul*, says a *Prophet of their own* declares so.

As for what that ingenious Gentleman objects as *having heard it from the Pulpit*, (*perhaps that of Covent-Garden*) that no other means but *Evidence* was used in the first Centuries for the propagating *Christianity*, and so would thence infer the *Unwarrantableness* of any other means; he ought to have

have consulted his Informant *whether Christianity was then settled and incorporated into civil Communities, or no.* For that makes a great Alteration in this Case; and when he comes to have settled that Point, it will be time enough to answer his Objection.

As to any Breach of any other Laws, we shall first consider that plausible One of the *Right every Person has to the Education of his own Children, which they say is a Natural Right.*

It will be owned, that no Person has any more Right to the Education of his own Children, than he has a Right to their Obedience: Now the Point is, whether or no the Government does not, and may not in many Cases alter that Right from some defect in the Parents, so as to make it unlawful for the Child to pay that Obedience. This is plain, that it does, and can, and if so, it may at least do the same in respect of Education for the same Reasons. But farther, every Parent has not a Right to Educate his Children after his own Manner; neither is it reasonable that they should, for this Permission might by degrees destroy the End of all Government. This might introduce such a Multiplicity and Confusion of Opinions at least, as might prove more dangerous to the State, than the restraint upon Parents would be, as an Act of Cruelty to that State. That it is not a new Thing for Governments to take upon them the Education of the Youth of their

their respective Communities, is evident from the *Persian* and *Grecian* Histories. And as for their being Heathen States, that is out of the Question, since it is before proved, that *Christianity* takes away no *Civil Right*, and so they are to be considered only, as Instances of Matter of Fact, and Examples of good Policy exclusive of Religion.

There is then no Reason for the Compassionate Authors of the *Letter to a Member of Parliament*, to cry out, *Prodigious! Monstrous!* for tho' this Age has been profuse of *Monsters* and *Prodigies* too, there are none, but of his own making, that concern this *Bill*. And we may still affirm, that no *Natural Right* is taken away in this Case, but what is warrantable from Reason, and what is necessary for the Preservation of the Government: Neither can I subscribe to this Author's Opinion; that it is a *lesser Evil* to obstruct the encrease of Mankind, than it is to debar them of what he calls a *Civil, Natural and Religious Right*. For it seems to me that the great End of Providence, which is the *Glory of God* in his Creatures, would be a much greater Evil if prevented by Man, than any after cruel Impositions of Governours upon those *Creatuers*. However for his own Satisfaction, I wish he would consult some of those, whom he is pleased to Stile our *best Divines*, before he presumes to assert a Proposition, contradictory to all *Natural and Revealed Religion*.

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But to proceed in the Method proposed : There remains now no Law, but some human Law, that is, a Law of that particular Constitution of which the Dissenters are Members, which can be said to be infringed by this Act. This Law is the *Toleration*, the meaning and effect of which is said to be eluded, and consequently the Law destroyed by the *Bill*.

Suppose then, we grant that the *Toleration* is destroyed by the means proposed to *prevent the Growth of Schism*, it only amounts to this, that the Government which was pleased to grant that Indulgence, thinks fit to retract it, which that they have a sufficient Power to do, appears by the Second and Third Proposition laid down at the beginning of this Discourse. And as to the Reason of the Thing, that depends entirely upon the Grounds of Credibility ; the Legislature entertain, That the *Dissenters* may injure, or subvert the Constitution by a longer Indulgence of this *Toleration*.

But this we argue meerly *ex Hypothesi* ; supposing the *Toleration* is eluded by this Act, the Contrary of which appears to be true. By the *Toleration* no one, I believe, ever understood any more than a *temporary* Indulgence to such Persons as thought they could not in Conscience conform to the *Church*, that is to the Persons of the *Dissenters* then capable of judging for themselves, and no others, in Hope that Time, and

a Desire of better Information, might bring them to a *Conformity*. Let any one peruse that Act, and see if he can find an *Indulgence for them and their Heirs for ever*; and if he cannot, and if the Act's Duration is left in the Power of the *Legislature*, then it is certain that it is no Injury to the *Posterity* of those *Dissenters*, because they never had a Right to that Indulgence; and what they never had cannot be said to be taken away from them.

The Force of the *Toleration Act* then remains good in its due Extent, as it was designed to reach no farther than these Persons already defined; and this Bill does not supersede, and vacate that Act, but only explains its Meaning and limit (as far as human Means can) its Duration. It is certain indeed, that the *Legislature* might have continued the *Toleratitn* without this *Restraint*; but at the same Time it is impossible to prove that the *Restraint* is unreasonable, unless it can be first prov'd that there is *no Danger* arising from the *Dissenters* to the Church and State.

Now it might be sufficient to say, That the Persons and Powers who are the proper Judges in this Case, think there is an Occasion for this *Restraint*, as apprehending a Danger from the *Dissenters*. Every private Dissenter judgeth for himself, and shall not the whole *Legislature* judge for themselves? But, the worthy Mr. Steel expostulates with the Senate, and her Majesty in

a strange Manner; he very passionately asks *what they have done, to make it needful to take farther Securities against them?* Do the Clergy remonstrate? Do the Universities complain that their Academies breed Men too hard for them in Dispute? No, good Sir, neither their Academies nor the Patrons of these Academies; and were you but a little read in Modern Controversy, you might perhaps, be convinc'd that the Church can Defend it self even against your formidable Pen.

But suppose there are none of these Complaints, yet it may be necessary to take *farther Security*. For, if the Principles of the *Dissenters* bear a direct tendency to overthrow the Constitution in the Church, it is apparent they *do*, that alone is sufficient Reason for the Nation to endeavour at the obstructing the spreading of those Principles. If the Permission of *Seminaries* might invite even the neighbouring Parents, meerly out of a Convenience, to send their Children thither, where they might imbibe a Hatred to the Church, together with their Learning, that alone is a good Reason for their Suppression. If again, we reflect on the licentious Extravagancies of these very Persons not a *Century* ago, when they had by a prevailing Villany got the Possession of a Power to overthrow the Constitution, both *Civil* and *Ecclesiastical*; we may then think it reasonable both as *Men*, and *Christians*, to prevent a return of that Usurpation. If there are not many Men old enough to remember those Days,

there are still so many indelible Traces, and Marks left in the best Families of the Nation, as are enough to make them fearful, and suspicious of the *Reign of the Saints on Earth*. The Memory of King Charles the First's Fate (who by the way was a true, and lawful King before the Word *Revolution* came in fashion) will not easily be wiped away, but remain a Mark of Infamy on the Principles of these Men, and a standing Warning against them, whatever Indulgences any succeeding *Glorious Monarchs* may allow them.

But the Patrons of *Schism* would not leave the *Toleration* thus ; they will make the best of a *Word*, and enlarge its Meaning to signify every Thing they want, as they restrain others to what limited Sense they please. The *Toleration*, says the *Letter Writer*, is a *Law which indulges the Dissenters in the Exercises of their Religion ; and where there is a Right to a Benefit, there are supposed to go along with it the necessary Means of attaining that Right ; Education is the necessary Means which this Law intercepts*. Now the Mistake of this Gentleman arises from not considering the Persons who were indulged by the Law, who are not the Dissenters to be Educated, but those already Educated in that Way of *Non-Conformity*. The *Minors* among them, as has been proved, never had any Right of Favour from the Law, and therefore they cannot be injured by the *Bill*. It may be ask'd what Reason there should be for the
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the making of this Distinction, and why the one Part excluded from the Benefit, and the other indulged. To which we answer, That in regard the Prejudices of the elder Dissenters are habitual and strong, improved into a Principle of Religion, and supported by the Plea of *Conscience*, the Government from a Sense of their *Weakness*, or perhaps from a Despair of their Conversion, may permit them to enjoy the Privilege of this Indulgence; the granting of which to the *Minors*, or which is the same, to the Parents for their Education, would not be an Instance of Lenity, but of the utmost Cruelty to these *Minors*. For what Nobler Instance of *Christian Love* can any Government give, than to use all lawful Means to reduce the Erroneous, and make a Provision for those to worship God in the best Manner, who are incapacitate to make that Provision for themselves? What greater *Charity* than that which is not determined to One present Act of Benevolence, but extends itself and its Blessings to succeeding Generations, forming a Happiness for those who are not yet living, greater than Life itself? Mr. *Steel* seems to be convinced of the Truth of the Doctrines, and the Beauty of the Discipline of the *Church*, that is, that it is the true *Church*, enjoyning all things necessary to Salvation, retaining the Primitive Orders, and necessary Distinctions among its *Clergy*; and therefore surely he must think those who have
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the Opportunity of *conforming to it*, and refuse it, *guilty of Schism*. He may, if he pleases, make himself merry with that *Word*; but if it be a *Sin* of that Nature which our Divines, and the *Fathers* too, have defined it to be, I think the *Church* shews a true *Christian Spirit*, in endeavouring to make it less general than it is at present.

There still remain some collateral Arguments, which this Gentleman makes use of, as Reasons why the Bill should not pass the Legislature. These he divides into such as may *affect the Tranquillity of the Nation in general*; and *secondly*, as it will *affect the Prosperity of the Church of England*.

It is affirmed in the first Place, That the *Publick Peace* will be disturbed, Distractions in Families and Neighbourhoods arise, Scorn and Derision will be the Portion of the Favourers of the *Dissenters*, and Rage and Indignation that of their Adversaries; and an Instance to justify the Consequence, is drawn from what happen'd formerly, at the Execution of the Penal Laws against the *Dissenters*. There is, indeed, no doubt but that the *Bill* will occasion some Uneasiness in those who think themselves Sufferers by it; and so would any Bill for the Preservation of the *whole*, which bore hard upon any Part of that *whole*; but I would fain know if that is Reason why the *whole* should not be preserved? It can be no Argument against the Goodness of a Law in general,

ral, That the Execution of it will be attended with some Inconveniencies. But we may enquire why there should be any Surmise, that these Disturbances should happen? Will not the *Dissenters* submit to Law? Is the *Author of the Letter* so deep in their Secrets, as to know that they do not intend it? For if they do submit, all his Consequence falls to the Ground; there will be no Divraction where there is a *Submission*. There is no Occasion in the Case before us; for the violent Method of *armed Men*, the Law it self directs the Executioners in an easy, peaceable Manner, how to make the Effects of it take place. So that Mr. *Steele's* Parallel is by no means true; and no Inconveniencies will attend the Law, unless the *Dissenters*, by their *seditionous Behaviour*, draw a severer Act upon themselves.

And indeed I think it a great Unhappiness in that Gentleman to let slip some Expressions, which seem to excite the *Dissenters* to pay no Obedience to the Law, provided it does pass; for he says directly, that it is such a *Violation of natural Justice*, that it may be made a *Question*, whether it ought to oblige, after it is enacted. Nay, further, he encourages Her Majesty's Subjects to leave Her Dominions, and fly to some other Protection. Both which, if not *High Treason*, are yet so near it, that nothing but the Lenity of the Government, which he has abused, can suffer the Author to go unpunish'd. The one is a plain Incitement

citement to *Rebellion*, and the alienating the Affections of the *Subject*; and the other an Advice which is a direct Diminution of *Her Majesty's Authority*.

Suppose the Dissenters should take Mr. *Steele* for a good *Casuiſt*, and be encouraged by this Authority to refuse Obedience to the Law after it is enacted; then I assure him that a better *Casuiſt* than himself determines him to be guilty of the *Rebellion*, which these People are excited to commit by his Authority.

And to compleat this Scene, there can be no *Progress* further, but an actual *Resistance*, and the Placing himself at the Head of the Disaffected, all other Lengths are already gone, and the next Degree is from Verbal to Active *Treason*. But thus it is, when the Men of *Liberty* are worked up into a Warmth for their Cause, they are always contradicting themselves, or over-rul'd by some strange Fatality to advance such Maxims, as either betray the *Weakness of their Reason*, or the *Iniquity of their Hearts*.

But we may ask the *Casuiſt* why this Law should not oblige? Is not the Law which is Much severer against the *Papists*, and their Education Obligatory? There is no Question but he will allow it, and if he does, every Reason that is of force against them, is good against the Dissenters too? Does the *Church* suspect a Danger from One? She suspects the same too from the

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Other?

Other? Has the Treatment of the *Papists* been Cruel to her at any Time? And have not even the *Mercies* of the Dissenters been *Cruel* too? It is easy to show that the same Arguments were made use of against the *Acts* which restrain the *Papists* in this Point, as are now trumped up in favour of the Dissenters, but that is no wonder, it not being the first Time that the Sons of *Geneva* have borrowed Arms from the *Romish Quiver*.

There is still behind a terrible Argument against the Bill, that the *Justices of Peace* are the Judges appointed to determine all Complaints of your Breaches. Mr. Steele, tho' himself a *Squire*, is so very angry with his Brethren on this account, that he mauls them for a Pack of insensible Block-heads, who ought not to be entrusted with the Management of the meereft Trifle in Nature. And as Mr. Bays says, *what does he do egad*, but compare them in the Fury of his Heart to-----What do you guess? a reasonable Man might fancy a thousand Things, before he could hit so pretty a Similitude;---- A *Turkey-Cock*. And by this Similitude (*which is more important to the Squires of England than I shall at this Time explain*) the Bill is proved an Illegal, Cruel, uncharitable *Act*. I must confess, there is no replying to a Man who brings such Arguments as these: No, no, he may safely Triumph now over the mortify'd *Squires*, and the *Senate* too. I am sure it has made such an Impression upon me, that whenever I see a *Turkey-Cock*

Cock raising his Crest, I shall think of Mr. Steele.

But to proceed with the Gravity of an *expell'd Senator*, now let us consider how *this Bill will affect the Church of England*. It will bring upon it an *unanswerable Scandal*, says our Author. First, as it will give *Arguments to her Enemies*, that she is *conscious of her Inability to defend herself by Reason and Truth*, when she flies to the *Secular Power* to take off her *Dissenters*.

Now, whatever he may imagine, this Argument of Scandal is as easily answer'd, as the other of the *Squire* and the *Turkey-Cock*. For this Reason is by no means good, unless it can first be proved, That every *Appeal to human Laws in Matters of Religion*, is an *Argument of the Weakness of the Cause which the Appellant maintains*; the contrary of which Proposition is a self-evident Truth, and needs not to be disputed. All that can be collected from such a Behaviour in the Church, is, not an *Inability to defend herself*, but a *Sense of her Insecurity from that Defence*; and therefore she justly uses other lawful Means for that End, which the *Secular Power* may permit her to use. The Force of *Truth and Reason* has been long tried in this Case; and the Church may safely defy them to produce any Reasons for their *Nonconformity*, which have not been answer'd again, and again; but still they persist in their Error, and not only so, but make *Advances by their Schools and Seminaries*, which might en-

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danger

danger the Constitution, and then it is high time. for to call in another *Power*, they being now become Disturbers of the *Publick Peace*, by these Encroachments; In which case Mr. *Steele* himself allows the Use of the *Secular Power* to be lawful. It may as well be said in a Dispute between two Persons, that when one perceives his Adversary preparing to murder him, he is certainly conscious of his *Inability to defend himself by Argument*, because he calls a *Constable* to seize the Person who threatens his Life.

A second Reason of this Author's is, *That it will carry in it all the Guilt which we object to the Roman Catholics, in founding her Power in the blind Obedience of the People, and not in the Conviction of their Minds.*

Now, either Mr. *Steele* does not understand what the *Guilt* of the *Romish Church* is in this Point, or he industriously affixes a Calumny on the *Church of England*, by a pretended Resemblance of Cases in which (supposing this *Bill* an Act of the Church) they widely differ. The *Sin* we charge upon the *Romanists* consists in their Locking up the *holy Scriptures* from the People, and the forbidding to use them, whereby it is impossible that the Laity should attain to the Means of Salvation, and in affirming that their *Church* has a Power to act thus; the Consequence of which is, that the People must be *implicitly obedient*. This *Bill* is no Instance that the *Church* acts

acts in that manner; nor is the Consequence of a *blind Obedience* deducible from it. *First*, This Bill does not restrain the Children of the *Dissenters* from the Knowledge of the Means to Salvation, because it leaves them at the Liberty of making Use of *Schools* where they may be instructed in those Means, till they are capable of judging for themselves; at which time, if they shall find a stronger Evidence for the Opinions of their *Parents* than the Doctrines of the *Church*, they may, and will adhere to the former. The *Conviction of the Mind* is what must follow, when the Powers of Reason and Understanding exert themselves, and they begin to distinguish between Truth and Error, and the Scripture having been open to them from the beginning, it cannot be said, that they wanted the Means of attaining the End; and therefore the *Church* is falsely accused as *Guilty* of the *Sin* she Objects to the *Romanists*, The *Church* of *Rome* is jealous, if the Scriptures were Read by the Vulgar, that the Foundation of her Power would be discovered to be false, but the *Church* of *England* permits (for all this Act) the publick Use of them; being conscious that she assumes no Power but what the Scriptures allow, and how then does she Exercise that *Tyranny* over the Mind of *Christians*, which the other does? All the *Obedience* (which he may call *Blind* if he pleases) which the *Dissenters* in this Case pay, is to the *Legislature* and

and not to the *Church*, from which they may still dissent, if the Means which the *Legislature* uses to lead them into a Compliance, has not its due Effects upon them.

So that Mr. *Steele* when he farther argues, that *force is made use of* in the gaining of Profelytes, goes still upon a wrong Supposition; for it is not *Children*, but *Men* that are the intended *Profelytes*. If indeed, after they are capable of becoming *Profelytes*, the *Law* should use a *Penal Act* for to urge their Compliance, then he might say, the *Law* or the *Church* (if he pleases) uses *Force*. After he has taken it for granted that this *Bill* is an *Act* of Compulsion, he begins to draw this Consequence from it, that there is no *Reason* now, why the *Church of Rome* should not employ all *Force* in reducing us, as *Schismaticks* from them? That is, he draws a true Consequence from *false* Premises; which Mr. *Lock* makes to be the Way which a *Mad-Man* uses in Argument, and distinguishes it very nicely from the *Reasoning* of a *Fool*.

All his fine Talk of *Inquisitions* and *Tyranny* is to no purpose, but a meer Artifice of applying odious Names to innocent Designs, and glancing at such Parallels as he imagines may raise the Indignation of his Reader.

As equally unjust is what he says, as to the Time and Occasion of the *Bill*. For after a Panegyrick upon the Dissenters, their good and peaceable Behaviour, he cries out, *And yet all*

*sudden, without any Manner of Provocation, a Mil-
 lion of her Majesty's Subjects are to have the Law, by
 which they enjoy the dearest Blessings of Life, taken
 from them. This Suddenness he is no Judge of,
 and yet he seems to be angry, that he was not
 pre-accquainted with the Design of bringing in
 the Bill; these Senators indeed were too rash, who
 knowing that Mr. Steele was ever watchful for
 the Publick Good, and zealous in asserting the
 Rights of his Fellow Subjects against anything which
 he apprehends to be an Encroachment, yet without
 his Consent and Approbation presumed to offer
 such a Law to the Legislature. Did they not
 know that since a late important Vote, he em-
 ploy'd all his Time in writing Pamphlets, and
 could they hope to avoid his Displeasure, or
 escape some Lashes of his Pen upon such an Occa-
 sion? Or did they think because he was an un-
 worthy Member of their House, and expelled ac-
 cordingly from his Seat in Parliament, that he
 was deprived of the common Benefit of Life, and
 could not write a Letter to a Member of Parli-
 ament? Vain Expectations! and which they are
 likely to suffer for, as long as he enjoys the Use
 of Pen and Paper.*

I can but leave them to his Resentments, and
 pity them. However, let us enquire upon what
 Grounds he affirms that this Bill against the Dis-
 senters comes in without any Provocation. We
 have before proved that the Legislature are the
 only

only proper Judges of the Occasion and Reasons of any Law offer'd to them, but if that is not sufficient for those People, who sometimes are for extolling the Power of Parliaments, and at others for diminishing it, as the Occasion happens to serve their Purposes; we must then appeal to Matter of Fact, and general Observation: Now, it is certain, and needs not be proved, that the Schools of the Dissenters are more numerous at present than they have been in former Years, that they use all Methods of turning either the Weakness, or the Poverty of the *Parents* of some Children who are of the *Church* to their Advantage, that the Practice of all the Arts of seducing and debauching the Minds of those whom Necessity or their Parents Folly has drove to them. It is well known too, that their Academies are full, and publick, that they pretend to be of equal Foot with the *Universities*, as much allow'd and encourag'd by the Government as *they* are, and all this under the Protection of the *Toleration*. I might add, what I know from the Report of some educated among them, that their constant Disputes turn all upon the Objections against the *Church*, and that if any one dares to be so hardy as to maintain an Argument in its Favour a little too strongly for his Opponent, he falls under the Displeasure of the Governors and Tutors. When these Methods are taken, not only for the imbibing of Principles directly opposite to the *Church*, and the hardning

hardening and confirming their Followers in them with as much Affiduity and Artifice as he *Jesuits* use, there can be no Reason given why some Care ought not to be taken to prevent the *Growth of Schism*. For if it be just, wise, and necessary, for the *Government* to guard it self in the manner it already has against the *Papists*, it is equally so, to do the same against the *Dissenters*, there being equal Danger arising from both. As to their Number, that, instead of being an Argument in their Favour, ought to be accounted a Reason for a stricter Care over them; and if they are a *Million* of *Her Majesty's Subjects* at present, then as a *Million* of dangerous Subjects, they should be lessen'd in the *next Generation*. I don't know what their Favourers mean by a *Provocation*; but if there are just Reasons for the *Bill*, that is sufficient. Would they have the *Government* defer securing it self, till they grow so numerous, that it will become impossible to do it? Would they have the *Church* sit tame and quiet, till they grow as mad and frantick as they did in the last Age; till they begin to *number the Host of the Lord*, and fly out into an actual Rebellion? It is to be hoped the *Legislature* will take other Measures, and check that *Evil*, which if not checked *now*, may prove too hard to be struggled with *hereafter*.

But Mr. Steele has not yet done with the *Bill*, as it is a *Religious* Concern, being of Opinion that it is very terrible to *Scrupulous Consciences*. Now,

these *Scrupulous Consciences* own their Dissention from the *Church* is founded upon things in themselves indifferent; 'tis an allowed Maxim with Casuists, that the *Publick Peace*, and the Preservation of *Unity*, ought to over rule all Scruples of that Nature: Because, in not conforming, they are guilty of an actual Sin; but if they do conform, they own themselves to be doubtful whether they are guilty or not. And how many are there of these *Scrupulous Consciences* who have conformed *occasionally*; which either shews that they believe it no Sin at all, or that they have no *Consciences*, or such as will allow them to equivocate grossly with God and Man? When their Number is thinned of those who would comply with *Occasional Conformity*, as believing it no Sin, how few will be left who ought to complain of the Bill as an Offence to their *Consciences*? And if they themselves could do this, what Reason can be alledg'd why they should not suffer their *Children* to do the same? If then he is in the Right by this Compliance, he will be obliged by his Conscience to instruct his *Child* to comply too; so that in this Way of reckoning, the Number of the *Dissenters* whose *Consciences* will be offended at this *Bill*, will fall much short of a *Million*.

Before we consider the *Act*, as it concerns the State, it may not be amiss to take Notice of a *Paradox* of *Squire Steele's*. After he has been so kind

kind as to direct Her Majesty to reject the Bill, he is pleas'd to make her a Compliment upon that Supposition, which I wish he would reconcile to Sense and Reason. By rejecting it, says he, *Her Majesty will do as great a Service to true Piety, and the Interests of the Church, as QUEEN ESTHER did, when she averted the Extirpation of the JEWS.* I suppose it ought to be read, the *Interests of the Dissenters, who are the true Church,* otherwise it is not reconcileable to Sense; for the *Dissenters* are here placed in the same Circumstances as the *Jews* were at that Time, and if so, they must be the *true Church*; and the Prevention of their Extirpation (which Mr. Steele supposes the Rejection will) is a Service to *them*, parallel to that of *Queen Esther's* to the *Jews*: But if it means the *Church of England*, if there is any Parallel in it; then that must be suppos'd to be in the Circumstances of the *Jewish Church*, and so to be *extirpated* by the *Bill*, which wants very much to be proved. The Compliment, indeed, is so dubiously expressed, that it's hard to tell who has a Right to it, or who will thank him for it, after it is explained.

The last Consideration proposed by this Author, That it will be a Means to weaken the *Protestant Interest*, and make the *Dissenters* run into Measures that may favour the *Pretender*, and draw them off from the *Succession*, as settled in the *House of Hanover*. Not contented with this,

he directly asserts, that it is their *Interest to do so*, as having better Hopes from one, than they have from the other. All who are Friends to the *Succession*, as established in the *House of Hanover*, ought to look upon this Advice of Mr. Steele's as a plain Contradiction to what he has always professed as his Principle; for whatever Zeal he may pretend for the *Succession*, it's certain he teaches the *Dissenters* an evil Lesson against it.

But, perhaps, it is not the Interest of these People (supposing them aggrieved by the Bill) to close with the *Pretender*, unless they do it, as he says, out of a *Spirit of Revenge*: For, if there should be this strange *Invasion*, which he and his Party talk of so familiarly, it would still be for the Interest of the *Dissenters* to employ their Hands and Purfes in Opposition to the *Invader*. I appeal to the Writings of these Gentlemen, for the terrible Instances of Cruelty which the Nation must in general expect from a *Popish Reign*; and can the *Dissenters* hope for kinder Treatment than the *Church*? I am sure their Tale bore another Face some Time ago; they were, in their own Opinion, to be the first *Martyrs* in that Day of *Trial*, and seemed to know the Spirit of that *Church* so well, as to expect nothing less than the bitterest Persecution: But if they stand *Neuter*, or assist the *Invader*, they may hope for some Sweetnesses, at least upon a Change, and large

Promises, which can but be broke, as he says those from the Government, already have been.

But there are still Reasons enough to forbid them in this Attempt, and keep them close to the Succession, for all this plausible Colour; for can there be any Comparison made between the Sufferings which are the pretended Cause of their present Clamour, and what a *Roman Catholick* Tyranny is likely to inflict? Have they not told us again and again, by way of Example, that those who promoted their Cause most, have been the worst used for it? Has not Mr. Steele himself labour'd to prove this very Point, and to shew that no Promises from a *Roman Catholick* Power are accounted obligatory, but are void of Force by the Nature of their Religion, which says, *No Faith is to be kept with Hereticks*? And is there no Difference between the small Restraint in this Act, and the Loss of Fortune, Liberty, Religion, and Life it self? The *Dissenters* must know very little of their true *Interest*, if they are so to be tempted to sacrifice all that is dear to them out of a *Pique* to the *Church*.

On the other Hand, if they exert themselves in opposition to the Invader, the worst they can expect, is only to *suffer the lesser Evil still*, (if it be One) and such a Behaviour may be the Occasion of making a Merit with the *Legislature*, for future Indulgence. At least it appears abundant more probable, that they will consult better for

for their own Security and Quiet, by closing with a *Protestant Successor*, than abetting a *Popish* Invader. Thus I think Mr *Steele's* Argument of *Interest* is refuted; and as for any others that concern this Question, I have heard none of any Weight or Consequence.

It is indeed pretended, that the *Toleration*, the Maintenance of which was *promised*, is entirely disannulled by this *Bill*. But I think that the contrary is proved already; however, if the Force of it in the Extent they mean, is taken away; it is reasonable in the Government to use its own *Power* upon this Occasion, as seems proper to the *Legislature*.

And the Truth of this depends upon the Third Proposition laid down in the beginning of this Paper, *That all Promises in Governours, which respect any Party of the whole, are conditional; and imply, That if such Promises are for the Safety of the whole, which, when they are found to be, the Power which enacted them, may justly revoke them; and that this is the Case at present, was proved before*

These are the Reasons which induce many to think, that the *Bill* is a just and reasonable *Bill* and to hope that the *Legislature* for the Church Security and its own, will enact it into a Law. In the Prosecution of this Subject, we have not dared to take those Liberties which the *Author* of the *Letter* has indulged himself in, who talks more like a *Dictator* to the Senate, than a *Pleader*.

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FINIS.



of a just Cause. Perhaps he may have some private Reasons to be angry, and out of humour; but Decency if not Civility ought to have obliged him to a little good Manners towards those with whom he was conversing in Parliament.

FINIS.



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